

# socialist standard

January 2013  
Vol. 109 No. 1301  
£1.50

Journal of The Socialist Party of Great Britain - Companion Party of the World Socialist Movement

## Campaign stills - still no movement



## The story behind single issues



Letter from  
the BBC  
page 5



Work in  
Socialism  
page 14



Commemorating  
WWI  
page 16



# socialist standard

JANUARY 2013

## contents

### FEATURES

<b>Anti-Nuclear Movement</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Single Issues</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Imagining a Socialist Society</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Oh! What a Lovely Centenary</b>	<b>16</b>

### REGULARS

<b>Pathfinders</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Letters</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Halo Halo!</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Brief Reports</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Cooking the Books</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Material World</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Greasy Pole</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Cooking the Books</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Mixed Media</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Reviews</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Proper Gander</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Meetings</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>50 Years Ago</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Action Replay</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Voice from the Back</b>	<b>24</b>

### The Socialist Party

52 Clapham High Street,  
London SW4 7UN

Tel: 0207 622 3811

Email: spgb@worldsocialism.org

Website: www.worldsocialism.org/spgb

Blog: http://socialismoryourmoneyback.blogspot.com/

### SUBSCRIPTION ORDERS

should be sent to the address above.

**RATES:** One year subscription (normal rate) £15. One year subscription (low/unwaged) £10. Europe rate £20 (Air mail). Rest of world £25 (Air mail). Voluntary supporters subscription £20 or more. Cheques payable to 'The Socialist Party of Great Britain'.

The next meeting of the Executive Committee will be on **Saturday 2 February** at the address above. Correspondence should be sent to the General Secretary. All articles, letters and notices should be sent to the Editorial Committee.

## Contact Details

### UK BRANCHES & CONTACTS

#### LONDON

**North London branch.** Meets 2nd Wednesday 6.30pm. Travelodge café/bar, 7-15 City Road, EC1 (nearest Tube and rail stations Old Street and Moorgate).

**South London branch.** Meets 1st Tues. 7.00pm. Head Office. 52 Clapham High St, SW4 7UN. Tel: 020 7622 3811

**West London branch.** Meets 1st & 3rd Tues. 8pm. Chiswick Town Hall, Heathfield Terrace (corner Sutton Court Rd), W4. Corres: 51 Gayford Road, London W12 9BY.

#### MIDLANDS

**West Midlands Regional branch.** Meets last Sunday of the month, the Briar Rose pub, 25 Bennetts Hill, Birmingham B2 5RE. Tel: Tony Gluck 01242 235615. Email: tonygluck111@btinternet.com

#### NORTHEAST

**Northeast branch.** Contact: Brian Barry, 86 Edmond Ct, Ryhope, Sunderland SR2 0DY. Tel: 0191 521 0690.

#### NORTHWEST

**Lancaster branch.** Meets fortnightly 8.30pm. P. Shannon, 10 Green Street, Lancaster LA1 1DZ. Tel: 01524 382380 Email: paddyjoeshannon@yahoo.co.uk

**Manchester branch.** Paul Bennett, 6 Burleigh Mews, Hardy Lane, M21 7LB. Tel: 0161 860 7189

**Bolton.** Tel: H. McLaughlin. 01204 844589  
**Cumbria.** Brendan Cummings, 19 Queen St, Millom, Cumbria LA18 4BG

**Carlisle.** Robert Whitfield. Email: robdotbob@gmail.com Tel: 07906 373975  
**Rochdale.** Tel: R. Chadwick. 01706 522365  
**Southeast Manchester.** Enquiries: Blanche Preston, 68 Fountains Road, M32 9PH

#### YORKSHIRE

**Skipton.** R Cooper, 1 Caxton Garth, Threshfield, Skipton BD23 5EZ. Tel: 01756 752621

**Todmorden:** Keith Scholey, 1 Leeview Ct, Windsor Rd, OL14 5LJ. Tel: 01706 814 149

#### SOUTH/SOUTHEAST/SOUTHWEST

**Kent and Sussex Regional branch.** Meets second Sunday every month at 2.00pm at The Muggleton Inn, High Street, Maidstone ME14 1HJ. Dave Chesham: Email: whichfinder@gmail.com Tel: 07973 142701.

**South West Regional branch.** Meets 2nd Saturday of each month in the Railway Tavern, Salisbury, 2.00pm (check before attending). Shane Roberts, 86 High Street, Bristol BS5 6DN. Tel: 0117 9511199

**Canterbury.** Rob Cox, 4 Stanhope Road, Deal, Kent, CT14 6AB

**Luton.** Nick White, 59 Heywood Drive, LU2 7LP

**Redruth.** Harry Sowden, 5 Clarence Villas, Redruth, Cornwall, TR15 1PB. Tel: 01209 219293

#### EAST ANGLIA

**East Anglian Regional branch.** Meets every two months on a Saturday afternoon (see meetings page for details).

Pat Deutz, 11 The Links, Billericay, CM12 0EX. n.deutz@btinternet.com

David Porter, Eastholme, Bush Drive,

Eccles-on-Sea, NR12 0SF.

Tel: 01692 582533.

Richard Headicar, 42 Woodcote, Firs Rd,

Hethersett, NR9 3JD. Tel: 01603 814343.

**Cambridge.** Andrew Westley, 10 Marksby

Close, Duxford, Cambridge CB2 4RS.

Tel: 07890343044

#### IRELAND

**Cork:** Kevin Cronin, 5 Curragh Woods,

Frankfield, Cork. Tel: 021 4896427. Email: mariekev@eircom.net

**Newtownabbey:** Nigel McCullough. Tel: 028 90852062.

#### SCOTLAND

**Edinburgh branch.** Meets 1st Thur. 7.00-9.00pm. The Quaker Hall, Victoria Terrace (above Victoria Street), Edinburgh.

J. Moir. Tel: 0131 440 0995.

JIMMY@jmoir29.freemove.co.uk Branch

website:

http://geocities.com/edinburghbranch/

**Glasgow branch.** Meets 3rd Wednesday of each month at 8pm in Community Central Halls, 304 Maryhill Road, Glasgow. Peter Hendrie, 75 Lairhills Road, East Kilbride, Glasgow G75 0LH. Tel: 01355 903105. Email: peter.anna.hendrie@blueyonder.co.uk.

**Dundee.** Ian Ratcliffe, 16 Birkhall Ave, Wormit, Newport-on-Tay, DD6 8PX. Tel: 01328 541643.

#### Lothian Socialist Discussion @

Autonomous Centre Edinburgh, ACE, 17 West Montgomery Place, Edinburgh EH7 5HA. Meets 4th Wednesday of each month 7.30-9.00pm. Tel: F.Anderson 07724 082753.

#### WALES

**Swansea branch.** Meets 2nd Mon, 7.30pm, Unitarian Church, High Street. Corres: Geoffrey Williams, 19 Baptist Well Street, Waun Wen, Swansea SA1 6FB. Tel: 01792 643624

**Cardiff and District.** Corres: Richard Botterill, 21 Pen-Y-Bryn Rd, Gabalfa, Cardiff, CF14 3LG. Tel: 02920-615826 Email: richardbotterill@hotmail.com

#### Llandudno

Contact: Gareth Whitley - Email: gwhitley@hotmail.co.uk

### INTERNATIONAL CONTACTS

**Latin America.** J.M. Morel, Calle 7 edif 45 apto 102, Multis nuevo La loteria, La Vega, Rep. Dominicana.

#### AFRICA

**Kenya.** Patrick Ndege, PO Box 78105, Nairobi.

**Swaziland.** Mandla Ntshakala, PO Box 981, Manzini.

**Zambia.** Kephas Mulenga, PO Box 280168, Kitwe.

#### ASIA

**India.** World Socialist Group, Vill Gobardhanpur. PO Amral, Dist. Bankura, 722122

**Japan.** Michael. Email: japan.wsm@gmail.com

#### EUROPE

**Denmark.** Graham Taylor, Kjaerslund 9, floor 2 (middle), DK-8260 Viby J

**Germany.** Norbert.

E-mail: weltsozialismus@gmx.net

**Norway.** Robert Stafford.

Email: hallblithe@yahoo.com

**Italy.** Gian Maria Freddi, Casella Postale n. 28., c/o Ag. PT VR 17, 37131 Verona

**Spain.** Alberto Gordillo, Avenida del Parque 2/2/3 Puerta A, 13200 Manzanares.

### COMPANION PARTIES OVERSEAS

#### World Socialist Party of Australia.

P. O. Box 1266 North Richmond 3121, Victoria, Australia.

Email: commonownership@yahoo.com.au

**Socialist Party of Canada/Parti Socialiste**

**du Canada.** Box 4280, Victoria B.C. V8X

3X8 Canada.

Email:SPC@iname.com

**World Socialist Party (New Zealand)** P.O.

Box 1929, Auckland, NI, New Zealand.

**World Socialist Party of the United States**

P.O. Box 440247, Boston, MA 02144 USA.

Email: boston@wspus.org

---

# Introducing The Socialist Party

---

The Socialist Party is like no other political party in Britain. It is made up of people who have joined together because we want to get rid of the profit system and establish real socialism. Our aim is to persuade others to become socialist and act for themselves, organising democratically and without leaders, to bring about the kind of society that we are advocating in this journal. We are solely concerned with building a movement of socialists for socialism. We are not a reformist party with a programme of policies to patch up capitalism.

We use every possible opportunity to make

new socialists. We publish pamphlets and books, as well as CDs, DVDs and various other informative material. We also give talks and take part in debates; attend rallies, meetings and demos; run educational conferences; host internet discussion forums, make films presenting our ideas, and contest elections when practical. Socialist literature is available in Arabic, Bengali, Dutch, Esperanto, French, German, Italian, Polish, Spanish, Swedish and Turkish as well as English.

The more of you who join the Socialist Party the more we will be able to get our ideas across, the more experiences we

will be able to draw on and greater will be the new ideas for building the movement which you will be able to bring us.

The Socialist Party is an organisation of equals. There is no leader and there are no followers. So, if you are going to join we want you to be sure that you agree fully with what we stand for and that we are satisfied that you understand the case for socialism.

**If you would like more details about The Socialist Party, complete and return the form on page 23.**



# socialist standard

JANUARY 2013

---

## Editorial

---

### The real single issue

---

A QUICK trawl through back copies of any daily newspaper for the last five years: Lib, Lab or Con, reveals one thing very clearly, that for many of us who work for a living the world creates much hardship and little in the way of freedom, security and peace of mind. Trawl back ten years, and the priorities shift a little, but the pressures remain the same. Trawl back 100 years and a long-term pattern becomes dismally familiar. Life in a capitalist society is always more or less of a struggle for the working class. In any month and year chosen at random, you'll find the press reporting on some threat to our freedom, our dignity, our livelihoods and even our lives. We adapt, of course, enjoy our social life, and when circumstances permit immerse ourselves in the dubious benefits of capitalism's consumer society. Yet we can only divert ourselves for so long, before we are forced to look beneath the surface to a perpetual story: endure, resist, fight back.

Capitalism has an endless facility for making trouble for the working class. Its exploitative nature ensures that it remains a constant threat. Its instability creates crises as a lemon tree creates lemons. And as one threat or crisis passes (or has merely worn us down and ceases to be news), another is ready to take its place. As working people, though, we have never lacked the will to resist or to fight back. Over the last century and beyond workers have taken up one cause after another and fought until they have either wrung

from government and business interests some brief and compromised concession or given up in despair. The range of campaigns is impressive: workplace rights, women's rights, the rights of minorities, welfare and healthcare reform, industrial pollution, warmongering, the arms trade, tuition fees, and an endless parade of other causes. Each has identified the source of their particular problem and its supposed solution in the actions of individuals, business practices or government - to little effect. Single-issue groups have campaigned with admirable energy and conviction against everything that capitalism has thrown at them, and yet the system trundles on, with little indication that its never-ending, problem-creating machinery will be stilled in this way.

The near-sighted aims of campaign groups are not unique but reflect the limiting vision of our society as a whole. Run your eye over any mainstream newspaper published in the last five, ten or a hundred years and one thing is certain: you will find no discussion, not even a whisper, of the nature of capitalism itself, nor any acknowledgement of the profound influence that its property relationships have on the endless roller coaster of crises and threats. To accept the prevailing vision is to accept a future that promises only a continuing cycle of threat and resistance to threat. The alternative is to find an enduring solution to working-class problems by looking beyond their thousand immediate causes to the source itself - and then to act on the knowledge that brings.

## Fracking – a bridge too far?

EARTHQUAKES IN Blackpool, flaming faucets in New York State. The hot new single issue of this year is surely fracking. Barely anyone even understands what it is yet but already the Greens are against it, and after the Chancellor gave the provisional thumbs-up including tax breaks to the new 'unconventional gas' industry in his December budget speech, right-thinking citizens everywhere will know in their hearts that fracking is definitely a 'very bad thing'.

Bad or not, fracking, or methane gas extraction through shale rock fracturing, is a text-book example of how capitalism periodically gets itself out of a fix by finding new commodities or techniques to replace old or unprofitable ones. The technique of fracturing rock with explosives and high-pressure water is being billed as new, but it isn't. Nor is horizontal drilling, which is necessary because shale deposits are spread wide but thinly. The thing that is new is that getting gas this way is now economically and politically viable. Economical because 'conventional' gas is unevenly distributed and getting harder to extract, while it looks like everyone apart from Poland has got oodles of this unconventional shale stuff. And politically? We all remember what happened when Russia spitefully turned off Ukraine's taps in the middle of winter.

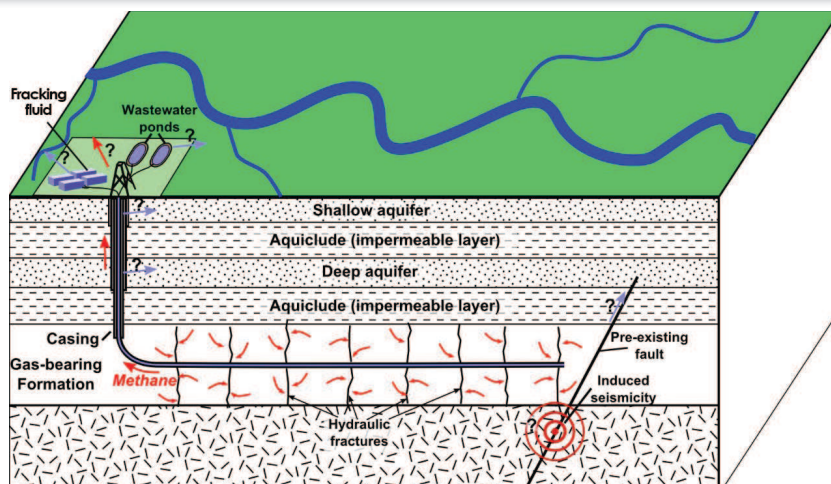
Fracking seems almost to have come out of nowhere. As is common in capitalism, and especially the USA, the smart money was straight down the well-heads before anybody thought to ask any awkward questions about regulation. And of course, first thing you know, cows are dropping dead after drinking poisoned water, flames are coming out of kitchen taps, and earthquakes are spilling cups of tea in northern England. Panic duly set in. The UK imposed a moratorium. Sarkozy banned fracking in France. Quebec and Poland followed suit. The main performance may yet turn out to be a success but the overture was certainly a disaster.

There can't be many people who don't know that the world is hitting an energy crisis. Oil is peaking, and tar sand oil extraction is a filthy, polluting alternative. Gas reserves are limited, and coal though plentiful is the dirtiest carbon culprit of the lot. Now after Fukushima nobody wants nuclear. Along comes shale gas, like a rabbit out of a hat, and hey presto, the opposition lobby is immediately in business. Protesters in Balcombe, one UK fracking site, insist that it is 'a very, very short term choice. We really should be putting money into renewables'. Caroline Lucas of the Greens complains of the government's 'irrational obsession with hard-to-reach shale and with keeping the UK addicted to fossil fuels' (*BBC Online*, 6 December). Meanwhile Damian Carrington rails against 'frack-heads' in the *Guardian* with lots of Green-friendly rhetoric but no real facts ('This fracking fantasy is the delusion of fossil fuel addiction', *Guardian*, 13 December).

Accusations of delusional thinking cut both ways. If the Greens think that this or any government is going to be able to turn renewables, currently just 3.8 percent of the national grid, into a major energy source right in the middle of a depression, they are up a tree. If one is looking for a practical and immediate solution to an existing energy problem, fracking looks like being it.

It's not clean, but it's 50 percent less carbon-belching than coal. It's not easy to get but it's getting easier. The much publicised fire faucets and poisoned water were almost certainly preventable accidents and cowboy carelessness at the well-head, rather than leaks from the kilometres-deep seams.

Although it's still early days and nobody's really sure how big



the deposits are, the current global estimate is of around 250 years worth of shale gas at current usage, with the likelihood of revision upward not downward. This changes the whole energy debate at a stroke. Now the talk is of a bridging fuel to a low-carbon future, ie renewables, that could be a more realistic century away. The Greens are aghast. Their whole strategy relied on states having no get-out clause, and this doable solution is the last thing they want. They believe, not without justification, that 'realistic' is politician-code for 'never', and that fracking will allow governments to ignore any investment in renewables for the foreseeable future. They are no doubt entirely correct in this appraisal, but that's an argument against capitalist politicians, not an argument against fracking.

This being capitalism, one would hardly expect the development of fracking to be straightforward and problem-free. One must remember that it is not a matter of answering the call of global need, which is fairly steady and predictable, but rather the call of profit, which certainly is not. Thus the US fracking bonanza has already depressed local gas prices, causing a minor energy slump and shareholder panic, but worse, investment has also slumped in conventional drilling and liquefied natural gas (LNG) technology. Since there is a decade-long lead time in the energy business between investment and return, we get the ludicrous situation, which only capitalism could create, that 10 years from now there could be a global shortage of gas due to its very abundance deterring current investors. If you want an example of capitalist absurdity you could do worse than this one.

Beyond this, it's not really for socialists to take a position on fracking, either pro or con. It's not a class issue, after all. If regulated properly, which is a big 'if' in some countries, there doesn't at present seem to be much of a case against it. It's true that methane produces 25 times more global heating than carbon, and there is some early and tentative evidence that it might leak up through the soil (*New Scientist*, 24 November), but it's not a long-stay gas so its effect is not likely to be as severe. If every new technology was abandoned directly there was a small accident, we would not have cars, planes, electricity or even steam power. Fracking is new, and the idea of blowing up the ground under our feet may seem intuitively alarming, but geologically speaking it's fairly insignificant unless some fool drills into an existing fault, and besides, what other immediate alternative is there? If the world miraculously mined its invaluable seam of common sense and abolished the real disaster of private capital accumulation through the market system, we'd still have an energy problem and fracking would still look like a good bridging solution. Only in that case the world's people might take the question of renewables with rather more seriousness than short-term capitalist politicians will. If the Greens ever want their arguments to carry any force, they should get real and support workers to abolish capitalism first.



## BBC reply on Marx

*We wrote to Stephanie Flanders about her programme about Marx but received no reply. A Socialist Party member did, however, receive this reply to an individual letter*

Dear Mr Maratty

Thank you for contacting us about *Masters of Money* and please accept our apologies for the delay in responding. I discussed your letter with the production team and the Executive Producer has requested that I forward you his response [below].

As you say, exploring Marx's ideas within an hour is a huge challenge for television aimed at the uninitiated. This is especially the case when the programme is made with reference to the recent financial crisis, itself a very complex issue. I am very sorry that you didn't enjoy this particular compression of the relevance of Marx's thinking, and hope this letter explains some of the thinking behind the programme to your satisfaction.

The reason why we concentrated so heavily on the 'can't buy back' idea is that the programme and series was framed around explaining the recent global financial crisis. The thinkers featured in the programme who spoke in support of Marx in some shape or form – Joseph Stiglitz, Nouriel Roubini, George Magnus, Raghuram Rajan, Tariq Ali, David Harvey and Martin Jacques – all highlighted this particular reading of Marx's ideas as being the one most pertinent today, as did our academic advisors at the Open University. I am aware that there are many other Marxist or Marxian readings of our current situation, but given the constraints, this seemed the best one

to focus on.

You object to our description of Marx having 'next to no alternative laid out'. We believe this description to be fair and it is supported by a number of commentators and academics. As you say, not having a 'blueprint' and not having an 'alternative' are not one and the same, but if one asserts the existence of an alternative without describing in any great detail what that alternative might be and how it might work, it seems reasonable to say there is 'next to no alternative laid out.' We also explained in commentary and through interviews with Tariq Ali and Slavoj Žižek, why logically Marx might not have felt able to give a very detailed description of an alternative.

You write that there was no critical examination of 'Marx and the so-called 'Communist' countries, the link between the two being taken pretty much for granted, with a couple of very minor caveats.' We did make clear that Marx's lack of a detailed blueprint should lead us to question his association with 20th century Communism, and we asserted that the 'Communist countries... left Marx far behind'. That said, it was necessary to mention them as they were real world attempts to find an alternative to capitalism constructed by people who claimed to be following Marx's thinking, and - as a result - audiences would expect any discussion of Marx, and any discussion of alternatives to capitalism, to mention them. We felt the overall direction of the

programme - advancing Marx's theories as being useful today and exploring some surprising aspects of his writings about capitalism – would have helped uninitiated audiences learn that there is far more to Marx than his association with 20th century Communism. Indeed this was a major thrust of the opening sequence.

You take issue with the use of the word 'collapse' to describe Marx's descriptions of the end of capitalism. I hope I understand what you mean here. I think you are suggesting that capitalism does not end because it is inherently unworkable, but because through its development it inevitably creates the political and social conditions that lead

to its overthrow, and that by using the word 'collapse' we underplay the importance and role of the proletariat. We did explain also the end of capitalism by saying: 'He thought it would all get so bad that the workers would overthrow the system', also in the opening titles we say 'Karl Marx had the most radical advice of all: get rid of [capitalism]', and we do discuss Marx's thinking on the revolution that ends capitalism. Either way, Marx certainly did envisage a time when capitalism would no longer be and 'collapse' is a reasonable shorthand for Marx's best known description of the end of the system in *Capital*.

Finally, you ask us why we didn't consult your organisation. We contacted a wide range of commentators – both pro and anti-Marx but because of the constraints of time, we are not always able to contact everyone. We believe the people we spoke to enabled us to produce a good overview of the issues surrounding Marxian economics.

Thank you again for taking the time to write and I hope you would agree that while not offering anywhere near a complete appraisal of Marx's ideas, it might have served as an engaging introduction.

I hope this addresses the points you raised and explains the production's view. We're grateful to you for watching and for taking the time to contact us.

**Paul Kettle, BBC Audience Services**

**Reply:** Some of the Executive Producer's comments are fair enough, but some are very weak. For example, the defence of the use of the word 'collapse' – Editors.



Stephanie Flanders

SUBSCRIPTION OFFER



**FREE**  
**SOCIALISM**  
**OR YOUR MONEY BACK**

Articles from the *Socialist Standard* 1904 - 2004. A running commentary of 100 years of history by a socialist journal




WHEN YOU SUBSCRIBE TO

the **Socialist Standard**

**WORTH £9.95**

see page 23 for more details



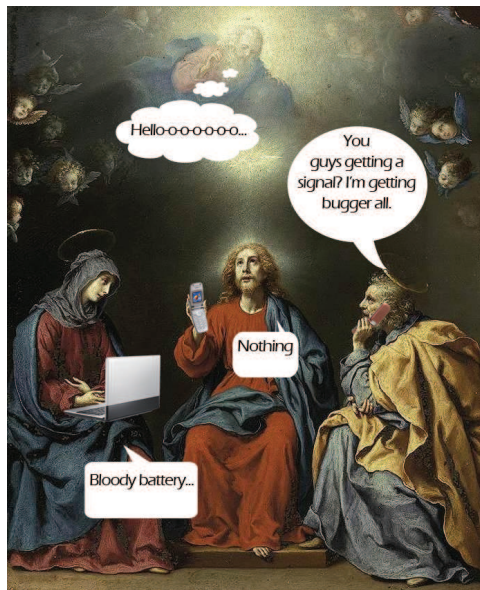
## Fitting God into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

IT'S NOT for us to advise the Pope, or the outgoing Archbishop of Cant and his successor on their image or on how to run their religions, but you do have to wonder, on what planet and in which century, do they think they are living? If they enjoy dressing up in ridiculous hats and robes to contact an invisible man in the sky and inflicting his unwanted views on us, fair enough. But expecting us to accept that their hallucinatory communications have a beneficial effect on our lives is pushing it a bit too far.

To be fair having a figment of your imagination as your boss who, by his own admission, moves in mysterious ways must make the job difficult. And having to take his 'holy word' seriously can only add to the confusion.

As for God, one of the problems he has as someone who doesn't actually exist is that he was unable to write his biblical horror stories himself. He had to rely on his early followers, St Paul for example, to do it for him. And Paul by all accounts was a bit of a lad, a persecutor of Christians before his own conversion to Christianity, and probably not best known for his pro-feminist views afterwards. And this, unfortunately, has been causing problems for some believers.

'Let your women keep silence in the churches,' said Paul. 'For it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.'



And while these views of Paul's in his letter to the Corinthians have apparently been quite acceptable until recently, the trendy wing of the Church who hope to drag it out of the dark ages find them a bit inconvenient - especially now that those who take them as gospel have voted against the ordination of women bishops.

Meanwhile the Pope, who doesn't seem to have problems with women not knowing their place in the Catholic Church, is also trying to update his image. As from 12 December he will be on Twitter to keep us updated with all the latest titbits about God.

And in November he published his new book about Jesus - *The Infancy Narratives*. He is now able to inform us that the stuff we had previously been told about the nativity was nonsense. Well, some of it was. The bit about the virgin birth was true of course. And about there being no room at the inn, and the three wise men, and the star that hovered above the stable was all true. But now he informs us that there were no singing angels, and probably no ox and ass in the stable either.

Some believers were disappointed at these revelations. A review of the book appeared on <http://catholicism.about.com>

and comments posted below included

'What purpose does Pope Benedict want to accomplish by taking the angels and the animals in the manger out of the story? After all he wasn't there when Christ was born. I believe angels are always all around us'.

and

'I was told that the pope was revealing secrets not revealed to the public before. Things like there was really not a crib when Jesus was born, the fact that space aliens are also children of God, and the treasures the Vatican has that the world will never see'.

Maybe getting God into the 21<sup>st</sup> century is being a bit ambitious. Try getting him into the Middle Ages first and see how it goes from there.

NW

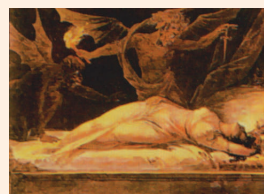
## Religious Observations

SOME DOOMSDAY groups are capitalizing on the fear by spreading the Dec. 21 myth online. A Belgian amateur astronomer named Patrick Geryl has set up an online community for people who follow him and believe the world will end in three weeks. He tells followers to stockpile 15 to 20 pairs of shoes and to be in good physical shape. Geryl declined an interview request, saying over email, "No time for interviews. ... Want to enjoy last weeks of our civilization." <http://tinyurl.com/bsotvu4>

A MOTHER who beat her son to death for failing to learn the Koran by heart, murdered him and burned his body to hide the evidence, a jury has found. Sara Ege, 33, treated son Yaseen, 7, like a "dog," brutally beating him with a stick for failing to memorise religious texts: <http://tinyurl.com/bvrnr8v>

INMATES IN a women's prison near the Chinese border are said to have experienced a "collective mass psychosis" so intense that their wardens summoned a priest to calm them. In a factory town east of Moscow, panicked citizens stripped shelves of matches, kerosene, sugar and candles. A huge Mayan-style archway is being built — out of ice — on Karl Marx Street in Chelyabinsk in the south. For those not schooled in New Age prophecy, there are rumors the world will end on Dec. 21, 2012, when a 5,125-year cycle known as the Long Count in the Mayan calendar supposedly comes to a

close. Russia, a nation with a penchant for mystical thinking, has taken notice: <http://tinyurl.com/ce9kfnx>



THE REIGNING scientific consensus on sexual orientation is that it's an inherited, biological trait, but that's just because scientists don't know how to party. A far sexier explanation has been offered up by Christian magazine *Charisma*,

which conducted its own investigation into the origins of homosexuality to reveal the real culprit: sex with demons.

"Can demons engage in sexual behaviors with humans?" the magazine asks. Why yes, they can! At least according to the article's primary source, a former stripper-turned-ministry leader named Contessa Adams: <http://tinyurl.com/cmsfg6q>

WHEN WATER started trickling down a statue of Jesus Christ at a Catholic church in Mumbai earlier this year, locals were quick to declare a miracle. Some began collecting the holy water and the Church of Our Lady of Velankanni began to promote it as a site of pilgrimage. So when Sanal Edamaruku arrived and established that this was not holy water so much as holey plumbing, the backlash was severe. The renowned rationalist was accused of blasphemy, charged with offences that carry a three-year prison sentence and eventually, after receiving death threats, had to seek exile in Finland: <http://tinyurl.com/con82cc>





## No profits, no growth

Growth – the accumulation of capital – is what capitalism is all about. There can be a debate about whether this growth is a good (increasing society's ability to produce and so, in theory, to eliminate poverty and deprivation) or a bad thing (damaging the environment and depleting resources because of the unplanned way it happens), but this is rather academic as it's going to happen anyway. Or not. Growth under capitalism is not a straight line but more like the blade of a saw with peaks and troughs. At the moment the economy is in a trough, with production 4 percent below the last peak in 2008.

Governments know enough about capitalism to realise that the way-out of the current situation for them is 'growth'. This would lead not only to increased consumption and a fall in unemployment but also to a rise in government revenue from taxation and so ease its debt problem. Which is why the Coalition has adopted a 'growth strategy'. But growth is not something governments can control.

Growth comes about by profits being re-invested in expanding production and productive capacity, and so depends on profits being made. The flip side is that if profits are not being made there can be no growth. In fact, growth stops precisely because it has become unprofitable to produce at the same level as previously. Which is what happened in 2008.

Growth won't resume until it again becomes profitable, as the government has found out by the failure of one of its policies – encouraging private investment in infrastructure projects. Philip Lachowycz, of Fathom Consulting, noted in the *Times* (26 November):

'The main plan has been to kick start investment for around 500 proposed infrastructure projects with pension fund capital worth £20bn. So far the proposals have completely failed to take-off. The government has been unable to encourage the private sector to invest in new roads, housing or anything else for that matter. Official data show that infrastructure spending is down 11 percent from a year ago and the government has raised less than £1bn.'

The CBI demanded that the government insure capitalist firms against any losses from this but the government has refused so the private investment has not materialised (so much for the much-vaunted 'risk-taking' that capitalist apologists trot out to justify profits). But, says Lachowycz,:

'There is a simpler explanation – the chronically low rate of return. At Fathom Consulting we calculate that the real rate of return on all fixed capital expenditure has collapsed in recent years and stands at only 0.5 per cent. For infrastructure specifically, it is lower still, and may even be negative.'

On their website accompanying the article is a graph of the 'real rate of return on fixed capital investment' from 1988 to 2012, showing a fall from 4 percent in 2007 to 0.5 percent today. But it is not only the return on investment in fixed capital that is too low:

'OK, but surely everybody agrees that the UK has a severe shortage of housing and should now embark on a major house building programme? Not us. For housing specifically, we find that the rate of return is deeply negative, as house prices remain significantly overvalued relative to income.'

What a condemnation of capitalism this rather cynical but eminently realistic comment represents! People need houses, hospitals, schools and other amenities but they are not going to get them because the 'rate of return' is too low or negative. Time to get rid of the profit system.

## PUBLICATIONS ORDER FORM

### PAMPHLETS

Price and Qty

An Inconvenient Question: Socialism and the Environment.....	£2.00 x
What's Wrong With Using Parliament?.....	£1.00 x
Ecology and Socialism.....	£1.00 x
From Capitalism to Socialism: how we live and how we could live....	£1.00 x
Africa: A Marxian Analysis.....	£1.50 x
Socialism as a Practical Alternative.....	£1.00 x
Some aspects of Marxian Economics.....	£2.00 x
How the Gods were Made.....	£1.50 x
Marxism and Darwinism by Anton Pannekoek.....	£1.50 x
How we Live and How we Might Live by William Morris.....	£1.50 x
The Right to be Lazy and other articles by Paul Lafargue.....	£2.00 x
Marxism Revisited.....	£2.00 x
Socialist Principles Explained.....	£2.00 x
The Market System must Go! Why Reformism doesn't work.....	£2.75 x
<b>All the above pamphlets (25% discount).....</b>	<b>£15.00 x</b>

### BOOKS

A Socialist Life by Heather Ball.....	£3.75 x
Are We Prisoners Of Our Genes?.....	£4.75 x
Socialism Or Your Money Back (reduced from £9.95).....	£4.00 x
<b>All the above books and pamphlets (25% discount).....</b>	<b>£20.00 x</b>

### DVD

Capitalism and Other Kids' Stuff.....	£5.75 x
Poles Apart? Capitalism or socialism as the planet heats up.....	£5.75 x

**TOTAL** .....£

All prices include postage and packing. For six or more of any publication, reduce the price by one third.

Return this form along with your cheque or money order to:  
**The Socialist Party of Great Britain, FREEPOST, London, SW4 7BR, United Kingdom.**  
 (No postage necessary if mailed within the UK)

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

City.....

Postcode.....

County.....

PHONE (optional).....

E-MAIL (optional).....

# The Second Nuclear Age

FIVE YEARS ago, we reminded readers of this column that 'nuclear weapons are still there' (*Socialist Standard*, February 2008). True, many fewer of them than at the height of the Cold War. But more than enough to turn the surface of our planet into a radioactive wasteland and still have plenty left over.

In a recent book entitled *The Second Nuclear Age* (Henry Holt & Co., 2012), the prominent American nuclear strategist Paul Bracken argues that nuclear weapons are now regaining their relevance to statecraft. They are making a comeback. The risk of nuclear war is significantly higher now than it ever was in the past.

This is partly because more states now have nuclear weapons at their disposal. The 'old' nuclear powers – the USA, USSR/Russia, China, Britain and France – have been joined by Israel, India, Pakistan and North Korea. Iran, as we are constantly told, may get hold of nuclear weapons within a few years. If so, other Asian states may not be far behind.

## Rogue states?

Coverage of the issue of nuclear proliferation in the Western media is dominated by speculation about the dangers of nuclear weapons getting into the hands of 'rogue states' like Iran and North Korea. These countries are selected for special attention not because their rulers are exceptionally irresponsible but because they are at loggerheads with the Western powers.

However, there are equally good reasons to worry about the possible use of nuclear weapons by Israel and Pakistan. Both of these presumed Western allies rely on rapidly growing nuclear arsenals to compensate for the potential vulnerability of their territory and conventional forces.

Recent developments in military technology increase the risk of escalation from conventional to nuclear war. The availability of much more powerful – though still 'conventional' in the sense of non-nuclear – weapons blurs the previous distinction between conventional and nuclear weapons, especially as both kinds can be carried by the same delivery vehicle. How can anyone tell whether an incoming Cruise missile is armed with a conventional or a tactical nuclear warhead?

Nevertheless, the main reason why nuclear weapons pose a greater danger now than they did in the second half of the last century is the emergence of a more complicated and less stable interstate system.

## A complex equation

The Cold War system was organized primarily around the bilateral US-Soviet axis. There were no territorial disputes between the two superpowers; their spheres of control in Europe were rigidly demarcated; and their rivalry in the Third World was constrained by implicitly understood 'rules of play'.

The newly emergent system is multilateral. There are territorial disputes even between nuclear powers, such as the continuing confrontation of India and Pakistan in Kashmir. China is striving to establish a sphere of influence in the Western Pacific, but there is no recognition of such a sphere by Japan or the United States. The result is a clear potential for armed conflict in the South and East China Seas and over Taiwan (on the South China Sea, see MW for April 2009 and June 2012). In the Middle East, Israel seeks to preserve its regional monopoly of nuclear weapons by any means necessary.

A multilateral system makes arms control and conflict management vastly more difficult. Thus, even supposing for a moment that conditions were generally conducive to a long-term relaxation of tensions between India and Pakistan, India would still be unable to reduce its conventional and nuclear forces to a level that posed no threat to Pakistan. That is because Indian



strategists have also to take into account the balance of forces between India and China.

Then how about trilateral negotiations between India, Pakistan and China? But Chinese strategists have to factor yet other powers into their calculations – Russia, Japan, the United States. An attempt to settle a conflict between just two countries quickly turns into a complex equation with many variables. So it is not all that surprising that there should be no current global equivalent to the US-Soviet arms control negotiations of the Cold War era.

## A world without nuclear weapons

The goal traditionally pursued by campaigners for nuclear disarmament was a world without nuclear weapons – but a world still divided into competing states and blocs, still plagued by conflicts over resources, still armed to the teeth with non-nuclear weapons. The strategy was to separate the issue of nuclear weapons from its broader military and political context and deal with it first. Then, with nuclear weapons out of the way, the next goals would be conventional disarmament, a lasting peace, perhaps a united world.

Arguably this was never a feasible plan. But under the special conditions of the Cold War era it *looked* as though it might be feasible. Those conditions have now changed – and not for the better. The end of the Cold War did not bring a world without nuclear weapons any closer. On the contrary, the image of that world has receded rapidly and is already well on the way to oblivion.

This does not mean that a world without nuclear weapons is impossible. It means only that such a world must take the form of a united human community that has no use for weapons of any kind. The efforts of people who want a better world – or simply human survival – must be geared directly toward that goal, for there is no viable halfway house.

**STEFAN**





# How *not* to Spoil Your Vote.

## And Why

THE GENERAL Election of 1992. A reminiscence. Going to the local polling station after

all the experts had used their surveys and samples and focus groups to let us know that our one and only choice had to be between the hysterical bluster of Neil Kinnock and the plaintive reticence of John Major. Planning to use my voting paper to state the Socialist reasons to reject all of them and set out the real alternative. My six-year old son Tom agreed to come with me, probably after his own expert analyses had led him to hope for a consequent happy visit to the local *Game Boy* stockist; he had not then read any Upton Sinclair or George Orwell or *The Communist Manifesto*. The polling station was pretty busy with so many people hunched over their voting paper. Not long after I had begun my contribution, when I had barely had time to deal with the negatives of Kinnock and Major, Tom became impatient and embarrassed by my being immobile while so many others were so quickly in and out. When his muttering and sleeve tugging became too intrusive I cut short my mini-manifesto and we headed off for the *Game Boy*. I blamed the politicians.

This was brought to mind by the low voter turn-out in some of the recent by-elections – Corby, Manchester Central, Cardiff South – and the reasons suggested by the political pundits, who so often claim to be The Voice Of The People, that the voters were suffering from a compound of habitual apathy and election weariness. Which did not take enough account of the reports that an interesting number of those who did go to the polls completed their ballot paper not by a cross but a statement of their reasoned opposition to all the candidates and in some cases their disgust with the entire media-obsessed game of politics and its players. This was not apathy but an active statement of choice. Truly, it could have been better – more effective and encouraging – had it been driven by a conscious intention to point towards the valid alternative but it was enough to allow a tremble of optimism that as a habit it might catch on.

### Corby

Meanwhile in Corby there was a notable turn-out of 42 per cent to hint that the one-time steel town had shaken off its flirtation with the undeviatingly self-promoting Tory Louise Mensch. It says enough about David Cameron's vaunted "A" List of candidates that it should throw up somebody like Mensch and it was to widespread relief that she announced her intention to resign the seat as soon as possible to spend more time with her trans-Atlantic family and her heavily prosperous pop-star manager husband. Which aroused some rumours about the reasons for Cameron failing to make himself aware of her glittering talents. And – perhaps crucially – about the evidence that had she clung on she would have been crushed in the next general election. None of this prevented her, during the by-election, praising her

aspiring successor Tory Christine Emmett as "...a true local girl...she'd be a wonderful MP", apparently unaware that this might have lost Emmett a bunch of votes.

### Manchester Central

In Manchester Central, had she dared to show her face, Louise Mensch would not have received a warm welcome. This constituency's turn-out of 18.16 per cent was the lowest since the by-election in Poplar during the unusual circumstances of 1942; it is a place which has never before had a woman Labour MP. In a constituency where, according to one voter, the party could "put a rosette on a dustbin and it would win" Labour offered one Lucy Powell who, although undoubtedly a woman, was considered to be steeped enough in Labour politics – Ed Miliband's leadership campaign manager and then Deputy Chief of Staff – to be welcomed as a "Labour Party apparatchik". There was however one niggling doubt about her; in the neighbouring Manchester Withington in 2010 she surprised a lot of people by failing to unseat the LibDem MP John Leech. So that in the recent by-election her candidacy needed to be nourished enough for her to trot out banalities like "We have to think in terms of empowering communities to make decisions for themselves and get people involved so they feel they can aspire". Well in the end it all went according to plan; the dustbin came out on top and Manchester Central has a new woman MP.

### Rotherham

As the polling stations closed their doors and Louise Mensch faded away across the Atlantic attention switched to three other by-elections: Croydon North, (turn-out 26.5 per cent) Middlesbrough (25.91 per cent) and Rotherham (33.63 per cent). The last of these contests was unusually piquant because of its similarity to Corby in the voters' assumed anger over its MP's behaviour. Denis MacShane was forced to resign over a succession of matters including some typically extravagant expense claims which brought his integrity into question. One example was a clutch of 19 false invoices which he submitted, described by a Parliamentary Committee as "plainly intended to deceive". Little wonder that the Respect candidate ran a poster van publicising "Denis MacShane". Rotherham's reputation is as a tough town where once they dug coal and smelted steel; it has not elected a Conservative since Labour's disaster days of 1931. And it has never before had a woman MP. Which raised some searching questions (and a walk-out of members) when the locally prominent Maroof Hussain was beaten to the nomination by a national party favourite Sarah Champion, who went on to win with a delighted UKIP in second place.

None of these elections would have caused any abstinent electors or polling booth essayists to doubt that, at the least, they had appropriate consistency their side. If capitalism's current crises have done nothing else it is to expose the impotent panic among the self-appointed experts – the economists, politicians, analysts and the like – as each of their preferred remedies is exposed as a discredited sham. It is in contrast to that feeble confusion that those who stand aside to put forward the case for a different, cohesively humane system can truly be described as the radicals.

**IVAN**



**Denis MacShane: forced to resign**

*The 2011 Fukushima disaster (below) exposed how energy companies sacrifice safety for profit, but the single issue anti-nuclear movement has little to say about the profit system.*



# Anti-Nuclear Movement Unclear On Capitalism

**A**s a Tokyo resident, I had a first-hand view of the anti-nuclear movement taking shape after the Fukushima nuclear disaster of March 2011. I work in the district where most of government ministries are located, not far from the Diet building and the headquarters of Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO), so I've encountered all sorts of protests, large and small.

The protests were a welcome sight to me not just because they expressed the anger felt toward that rotten outfit, TEPCO, and the elite bureaucrats who have done its bidding; but also because Japan has been sunk in a depressing mood of political apathy over the past two decades. To finally witness spirited demonstrations that brought together all sorts of people was invigorating. Particularly impressive were the festive gatherings outside the Prime Minister's Residence every Friday last summer.

In recent months the protests have quieted down considerably, but anti-nuclear sentiment remains among much of the population, as was clear during the December general election campaign when politicians of all stripes made (usually vague)

promises to eventually phase out nuclear energy.

The debate about the future of nuclear energy has taken capitalism quite for granted, however. Much of the discussion has revolved around whether it is "economically feasible" to dump nuclear power for alternative energy sources. Those in favour of the change try to bolster their case with a Keynesian claim that developing solar and wind energy will spur overall economic growth.

No plan is feasible unless it is profitable, which should already give anti-nuclear activists pause if they take the issue of human health and happiness as seriously as they claim. So far, though, the movement has shown little willingness to ponder the role of nuclear energy under capitalism, or how this profit-happy system heightens its inherent dangers.

## **A 'manmade disaster'**

A basic position among most opponents of nuclear energy is that it is beyond our ability to control; a technology that can never be made safe enough for human beings. The Fukushima disaster was taken as evidence of this failed technology—not the latest manifestation of a

disastrous social system.

The myth that nuclear energy is safe had been propagated in Japan for decades by the energy conglomerates and their network of politicians, bureaucrats, scientists, and journalists. This myth crumbled before people's eyes as the Fukushima disaster spun out of control. We saw the experts trotted out to insist that the accident was not as bad as it looked, or that radiation was not such a terrible thing. Scientists, government officials, and TEPCO spokesmen were still peddling the safety myth but the public wasn't buying it.

But, in a peculiar way, turning the safety myth on its head has helped let TEPCO off the hook. That is to say, if nuclear energy is a force that defies human control, the question of the company's responsibility becomes a secondary issue. Rather than being guilty of criminal negligence for the disaster, TEPCO could only be more generally blamed for promoting an unmanageable technology.

The underlying logic of many anti-nuclear activists is not so different from the way TEPCO tried to dodge its own responsibility by blaming the disaster solely on the 'unimaginable' scale of the tsunami. In either case,



the emphasis is on a natural force beyond human control.

But TEPCO's 'who'da thunk it' excuse did not stand up to scrutiny. The Fukushima Nuclear Accident Independent Investigation Commission, a parliamentary panel that carried out a six-month investigation of the disaster, stated in its report that 'The direct causes of the accident were all foreseeable prior to March 11, 2011'; and that 'The operator (TEPCO), the regulatory bodies (NISA and NSC) and the government body promoting the nuclear power industry (METI), all failed to correctly develop the most basic safety requirements.'



More specifically, the report points to how TEPCO overlooked various warnings over the years that had pointed to the 'high possibility of tsunami levels reaching beyond the assumptions made at the time of [the plant's] construction.' Another fatal screw-up was the placement of diesel generators and other internal power equipment 'within or nearby the plant,' where they were soon inundated by the tsunami.

Based on its investigation, the panel concluded that the disaster must be categorized as a preventable, 'manmade' disaster—rather than an unavoidable result of the natural disaster. Of course, the level of safety needed to actually prevent the disaster was well above what existed at the Fukushima plant, or what exists now at many nuclear plants across this quake-prone land.

### Preventable yet inevitable?

The crucial question, however, is not the technical issue of what TEPCO might have done to prevent the disaster but *why* it in fact did so little. This is a question that the government panel claims to answer but only arrives at a half-truth.

The panel's report clearly states that the 'accident was the result of

collusion between the government, the regulators, and TEPCO, and the lack of governance by said parties' adding that: 'The root causes were the organizational and regulatory systems that supported faulty rationales for decisions and actions, rather than issues relating to the competency of any specific individual.'

Remove the word 'root' and there is little to object to as a description of the corruption at the heart of Japan's nuclear industry. But blaming the 'organizational and regulatory systems' does not account for why the systems were so defective in the first place.



Left: the TEPCO museum. Above: Anti-nuclear protestors, and BP protestors.

Reading the report, one has the impression that TEPCO is simply an organization that society happened to entrust with the purely technical matter of running nuclear power plants, and that it fell short in that responsibility because of its organizational defects and the shortcomings of regulators. All that is needed, therefore, are fundamental internal reforms and stricter oversight.

But let's not forget that power plants exist not just to generate electricity but to generate *profits* for their operators as well. Couldn't that simple fact have had something to do with the lax safety measures and 'collusion' with regulators?

TEPCO executives may have acted stupidly in the eyes of the company's own scientists in neglecting safety, but at the time their decisions seemed shrewd enough to shareholders. (Although it all backfired spectacularly in the end!) What terrified the executives more than an earthquake or tsunami was the prospect of business losses.

In 2007, the company posted its first annual loss in nearly 30 years following the shut down Kashiwazaki-Kariwa nuclear power plant as a result of the fire and radiation leak caused by a magnitude 6.8 earthquake that same year. The plant was closed for two years, meaning

huge losses for the company.

The irony is that this disaster (and earlier accidents at the Tokaimura plant), which should have alerted TEPCO to catastrophic risks, only drove it to pursue profit more relentlessly, cutting corners to make up for its losses. Clearly, even though the disaster was "preventable," technically speaking, under the profit system accidents of some scale are a near inevitability.

The anti-nuclear movement itself has concentrated on the technical side of the issue, and only aimed to remove the 'evil' of nuclear power without placing any blame



on capitalism. Whatever their disagreements over nuclear energy, both sides of the debate support the continuation of a profit-based system.

### Out of control system

If the nuclear energy sector and its regulators were a monstrous exception to the norms of behaviour in other industries, the anti-nuclear movement's case might be compelling. But let's be serious. Recall that just a year before Fukushima the lax safety measures of British Petroleum and its subcontractors resulted in a three-month-long (!) oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. Or what about the deadly coal-mine accidents that occur every year like clockwork. Or take whatever industrial accident you like.

If the Fukushima disaster proves that nuclear power is 'out of human' control, as anti-nuclear activists argue, couldn't the same argument be made regarding those and other industries? Not only for the deaths of the workers in those industries, but because of the long-term health impact from coal-burning thermal plants and the like.

This is not to argue that 'nuclear energy isn't so bad.' The point is rather that an acceptable level of safety for nuclear power (if that is indeed

continued page 18



# Single issues versus the holistic approach

*What is the way forward: trying to deal with separate problems one by one or dealing with their common cause?*

The World Socialist Movement, of which the Socialist Party of Great Britain is a part, is a global movement committed to a fundamental change in the way we, the vast majority, live. Simply put the objective is common ownership and democratic control of the world's resources and the abolition of the wages system. This requires, first and foremost, a much deeper and wider understanding by the worldwide community of the underlying reasons necessitating such a radical change; second, a recognition of the common threads linking the numerous single issues, thus enabling and strengthening a holistic approach; and third, a thorough understanding of an outcome which goes way beyond anything on offer from mainstream politicians anywhere in the world.

It is widely accepted that the so-called 'western democracies' fall short of popular participation and that there are few spaces in which most ordinary folk can become involved and make any significant difference, even as cries on the street build to a crescendo of demands

unlikely to be met. Globally, protest has never been more apparent than it has been in recent years, mainly because of the rise of alternative, independent media and the internet, and it has manifested itself on every continent. For bread-and-butter reasons, for democratic reasons, for environmental reasons, for humanitarian reasons, for social reasons: and it is specifically in support of women, minorities, animal welfare, freedom of speech, alternative energy, and against war, apartheid, discrimination, corporations, austerity and neo-colonialism.

Protest is a response or reaction to being repeatedly and deliberately ignored, bypassed and abused on many levels but protestors have disparate claims and dissatisfactions which tend to keep or set groups apart from each other. One person's beef is another's side issue. Different emphases are dependent on personal situations and viewpoints. There's

**“Cries on the street build to a crescendo of demands unlikely to be met”**

strength in numbers' goes the old adage – but drawing disparate protest groups together under the same umbrella means first of all convincing those involved of how their particular 'issues' have the same underlying causes as those of the others and how they can all be resolved by coming together under this all-encompassing umbrella. However far removed the cut-and-thrust of one protest seems from another, traced back to their roots the fundamental they have in common is that they are fighting a system which determines outcomes by reference to a single measurement, that of the profit motive. It is this that results in the denial of sufficient representation, a lack of democracy in decision-making processes, and the failure of having dissenting voices heard.

## **Capitalist failure**

Why can't we just change things bit by bit, with different groups working in the areas that particularly affect them? The blunt answer is that this is precisely what populations have been struggling to do for centuries. Winning a minor concession here and there only to have it clawed back before too long or in a roundabout way. Slavery was supposedly abolished over a century ago but what is today's people trafficking for sex or forced labour if not slavery? The working class globally has continuously had to fight for improved pay and conditions; it is enslaved to a system that exploits it non-stop. Whatever gains have been made they have been vulnerable to being eroded. Endless strikes, walkouts, work-to-rule, picketing and protests have gained little long-term for the mass of workers worldwide. Each group has to face battle alone as sectors are threatened by or forced into wage freezes, layoffs or permanent unemployment.

The crux of the matter is the



# CAPITALISM

system of exploitation of the many for the benefit of the few; the system of profit which enslaves the working class. The ongoing battles are always civil organisations and pressure groups from the working class against corporations, big money and the governments which uphold the system that supports the capitalists. If it were possible to change the system piecemeal we would surely have seen the results by now – and we *do* see those results; we are now experiencing living under the changes we have gradually forged over generations – and they are an abject failure by most measurements. It is a proven wrong approach.

## Common threads

What is the connection between the anti-war movement and campaigns to

withhold contracts and favours, can choose to move production and other facilities abroad and who consequently exert non-democratic, economic pressure on politicians. The politicians are or become tools of the system and work in opposition to most of their electorate most of the time.

What the separate issues have in common is that they are up against the capitalist system's imperative, both ideological and legal, to seek maximum profit. Any concerted effort by any protest group is seen as antagonism to that imperative and presents a problem for the governance of capitalism. Proactive citizens are often problem citizens.

## Need for socialism

The capitalist system manipulates

neocolonialism and quasi-empire building for control of resources and influence – the vote is of no help in such matters. People have no part to play in decisions of this magnitude. People are excluded and will continue to be excluded – unless and until the people decide they *will* play a part and overtly use the political process to challenge the capitalist system.

Socialism entails inclusion, active involvement and equality of possibilities for all. Self-determined individual world inhabitants living in communities of their choice, contributing to society as ability and will decide, enjoying free access to the common wealth as need requires, shall together guide the direction of society without the encumbrance of the former hierarchical elite. All topics (including any currently perceived as single issues that continue) will be open for full discussion and participation before any decisions are taken in a transparent and democratic fashion.

*Unless and until* – the crucial factor in bringing about the revolution to socialism, to a socialist society, is just that. Unless and until the majority sees clearly that the way ahead lies in totally overturning this system that suppresses and oppresses us and comes together to work to achieve that end we can only continue on this treadmill which has repeatedly and endlessly failed us.

**JANET SURMAN**

## "If it were possible to change the system piecemeal we would surely have seen the results by now"

halt global warming, between those protesting cuts in healthcare services and others protesting increases in further education provision, or between the Occupy movement and those calling for 'green jobs' or a 'fair wage'?

The system does not allow space for meaningful involvement in major decision-making on a social level. Governments believe that cursory elections every few years authorise them to make all decisions on behalf of citizens. Sometimes we hear of 'consultations' when a particular location may be negatively impacted by a proposed scheme but, in reality, this usually means a small body or panel of chosen people, themselves not truly representative of the opposition movement, will be invited to give their perspective before a final (pre-planned) decision is given.

Those who *are* instrumental in affecting decisions are representatives of capital – corporations, big companies, who wield big money, who buy and sell, export and import, and who can

discrete sections of populations into thinking issues can be tackled separately, that maybe they can have some minor influence here or there. It's convenient to allow small triumphs and gains to reinforce the feeling that maybe, just maybe, this particular protest might bear fruit. However, regarding the huge concerns plaguing world society such concerns are out of the hands of citizens whether or not a part of the electorate. Inequality and the enormous discrepancies between the haves and have-nots; global warming, poverty, hunger and disease; warmongering and the massive accumulation of war material on an unprecedented scale; ongoing



# Imagining a Socialist Society (2)



***We continue the series, this time looking at work.***

**A**ll around the world, in the environment of capitalism, most people consider themselves 'lucky' to be 'in work'; 'lucky' to have the means to support themselves and their families; 'lucky' not to be one of those discarded as surplus to requirements. More thought is given to the remuneration for work done and the security of job tenure than to any concept of stimulation, satisfaction, fulfilment or contribution to the community – let alone to the collective aims of society.

In considering the difference likely within a socialist environment of voluntary work and free access we can begin to overturn these long-held values and explore the vastly wider possibilities of work being done for its intrinsic value and for its worth to society, unburdening all from the yoke of wage slavery and enabling each and everyone to extend their horizons in setting out to achieve their full, self-determined human potential.

## **Developing useful work**

There is much work done today both formally and informally which will need to continue. That which is socially useful now, whether recognised as legal or

informal or black market, will continue to be useful. There will be no antagonisms or fissures in society caused by protectionism or disagreements about who's taking whose work. The change will be that of ownership – everything will be owned in common and the best people to organise the running and functioning of workplaces will be those who understand and have experience of their particular discipline. In other words, the people who do the work now, but who will have become free from former constraints and are now able to determine different goals and outcomes.

Decision-making will be focused on benefits to society in general. Economy will relate to use of materials and reduction of waste. Doing and thinking, hands and head, will both be vital components in our socialist system – and as socialist consciousness will have grown to the point of enabling the change, so too the understanding and acceptance that all contributors to our new society are valuable. What are currently perceived as inequalities by some but as earned rights by others (reflected today in differences in pay scale, bonuses, holiday entitlement, pension) will be viewed quite differently. As we would wish to have our contributions recognised as worthy so too will we value the wide-ranging contributions of others.

All work that is paid now that is considered useful and beneficial to society will continue. Those now unemployed or underemployed will be welcomed into the world of free association as extra hands and heads. Likewise, work that is now undertaken voluntarily will continue to be useful and advantageous. The voluntary sector will bring forward many who already have well-developed social consciousness – previously having recognised the inequalities in society and the lack of access or opportunity afforded to others. Voluntary work after all is just another mode of occupation which currently fills many gaps deliberately left unfilled because they are a burden on the economy; where people are left needy according to the whims of the market and are rescued to some degree from their difficulty by people working for the common good.

What will become redundant because unnecessary in our society of free association will be the damaging, parasitical elements of current employment 'opportunities'. In a world of voluntary work and free access a sizeable portion of worldwide population will be freed up from spurious 'pseudo work', work that contributes nothing necessary, positive, useful or aesthetic to society. Work which simply moves money around or protects money and the moving of money around or incarcerates those who choose to defy the rules of the system by helping themselves to what, in the capitalist system, is perceived to be against societal norms. Instead they will have the opportunity to contribute positively to the aspirations of society as a whole. However, we can't simply denigrate those who work in these areas for doing so now. They, too, need employment in today's system and are merely doing what they have been groomed to do to fit into a niche deemed desirable and necessary. But what a huge



number of individuals will be released from what will be looked back on as an era of useless, worthless bondage to money. Released to be themselves; to become useful, valued members of their communities to which they can now add *real* value.

## Eliminating Waste

Waste of labour power, waste of resources, waste of time, waste of potential, there is so much unnecessary waste! One of our aims will surely be to eliminate waste of all kinds. Current waste levels, acceptable, even necessary to an extent in capitalism can be turned on their head in a socialist society which would redirect labour to



useful, productive and creative occupations. All use and reuse of materials will be carefully assessed as to their most advantageous and least harmful outcomes. Work in general will be carried out in comfortable, healthy environments using the most appropriate technology where it's a positive requirement and always with the opportunity and options for creative work left open. Not accepting the requirement of growth per se, the aim will be conservation and the achievement of a steady state with the philosophy of 'do no harm' – to animal, vegetable or mineral.

Quality goods will replace the obsolescence culture and whole new looks at transport, energy and infrastructure will bring about a *truly* sustainable approach. Fulfilment of individual goals other than consumption; development of the wider human faculties and societies working together for common social and environmental benefits will be the modus operandi. This is part of Marx's 'association in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all'. Also, as Marx pointed out, in socialism production is a question solely of planning and organisation in which producers do not exchange their products. All of us will be in effect involved in voluntary social work following a plan or plans endorsed by (most) of us. We will acknowledge the free association of producers, facilitators, transporters, administrators, caterers, carers, trainers, artists, educators, cleaners, entertainers, engineers etc, etc, all as necessary, indispensable cogs in a wheel – we each will play our part in keeping it turning and oiled for the benefit of all.

Although we will all participate in the work to be done we shall presumably see many changes in the structure and demographics of work. One very simple example – just look at rush-hour traffic around any large town, anywhere in the world. Thousands of cars rushing or more likely crawling to get to their destinations. Most with a sole occupant. Travelling many miles in opposite directions in the morning and still travelling many miles in opposite directions in the evening upon return.

Does a plumber or an installer of alarms really have to travel several hours to do useful work? Isn't it possible

that someone on the doorstep can perform such a function? Actually, will we need any alarm systems installed anyway? (Well, maybe fire alarms or other life-saving or life-enhancing systems.) It's the crazy job market that dictates where and how far people will travel. Imagine how much more efficient the whole caboodle will be in socialism – massive human energy savings, by vastly reducing travel miles (and fuel and emissions savings while we work on reducing these speedily to as close to nil as possible).

How much more pleasant and rewarding the whole work experience will become with easy access to the workplace meaning a less stressful day for a start – and a finish. With a fully integrated public transport system in place, cities could be restored, converted, transformed, even to be places in which it would be pleasant to live, clean and with expanses of green areas, woods, communal gardens, even agricultural areas. Gone will be the inglorious mix of slums and gated communities. Cities will become places worthy of living in when we've stopped seeking efficiency in money terms for every single thing and given back people the ownership of their communities and substituted the attitude of the best outcomes for people and planet in every situation.

The policies over the last few decades which have resulted in the demographics of rural and urban communities being totally changed, making it impossible for many to make a living in the rural areas and coercing them into cities and continuing poverty can be overturned with the will of the people. And when much of urban work will have become redundant, society as a whole will be free to choose the kinds of environments they wish to live in. In many parts of the world there will surely be a huge, voluntary shift back to the land, creating thriving, coherent communities with localised services.

Short-termism and consumerism as we have come to know them will be replaced by an understanding of the consequences of ignoring externalities. Capitalist corporations now largely ignore externalities; they don't factor the negatives into their equations. Cleaning up their mess whether in air, ground or water robs them of their profits; these costs in human health and environmental problems are not their concern. Individuals, being captives of the current system, are almost powerless to be in any way effective against the mighty machine. Whether adding hourly to the ever-growing mountains of plastic waste or depriving other communities of their potable water for us to be persuaded that bottled water is best, or propping up child labour through purchases of shoes and clothing, or simply putting petrol in the car – the system pretty well dictates what our choices must be. Whether as worker, consumer, tourist or activist we are obliged to choose only from what's on offer – and a choice that doesn't embody our principles is no choice at all.

## JANET SURMAN

*Concludes next month with a discussion of other aspects of a socialist society such as food, healthcare and education.*

"I've been teaching for 30 years, and I find this to be one of the best short films I have ever used" **DOUG BROWN, PROFESSOR OF ECONOMICS, NORTH ARIZONA UNIVERSITY**

*Capitalism and Other Kids' Stuff* is a short film from The Socialist Party which questions some of the most basic assumptions about life in capitalism.

For a copy, complete the order form on page 7



# Oh! What a Lovely Centenary

*Last October David Cameron delivered a speech at the Imperial War Museum detailing the government's plans to commemorate the centenary of the First World War.*

Also known as the Great War this was to have been 'the war to end all wars'. There will be commemorative events to mark the outbreak of the war in August 1914, various battles such as the naval battle of Jutland, the disastrous Churchill-inspired Gallipoli campaign, the 'bloody' first day of the Somme, the Third Battle of Ypres popularly known as Passchendaele, and the Armistice of 11 November 1918. This is quite a number of events that will be commemorated between 2014 and 2018. It could be like the Royal Wedding, Diamond Jubilee, Olympics, Princess Diana's funeral and the première of Michael Morpurgo's *War Horse* for four long years as the capitalist class endeavours to bolster British nationalism and militarism.

It is interesting to note that in 1964 for the fiftieth anniversary there were no commemorative events apart from the 26 episodes BBC documentary series *The Great War*, and in the same year film director Joseph Losey made *King and Country* set in the Great war with a marked anti-war sentiment.

## **Nationalist propaganda**

Cameron's speech was a great example of capitalist class propaganda to induce that false solidarity of 'we're all in it together', to make 'us', the working class, identify 'our' interest not with our own class but with that of the interests of the ruling capitalist class through identification with the 'we' of the nation state. Words like 'we', 'us', and 'our' are used all the way through Cameron's speech.

Celebrations such as the Royal Wedding, Olympics, and Diamond Jubilee are all part of making the working class identify with the nation state, and the normality and routine nature of donations to Help For Heroes or

the Poppy Day Appeal all combine to create a powerful consensus in the nation state with its strong links to the military. It helps soften up the working class to accept the need for military action, as recently in Iraq or Afghanistan or Iran.

Cameron said in his speech 'the Diamond Jubilee celebrated this year, says something about who we are as a people'. Actually, what it says is that we, the working class are subjects to a relic from feudalism, and that if we can be made to accept the inherited privilege of the Royal Family we can almost certainly accept the inequalities and exploitation of capitalism.

Cameron described a visit he made to Gallipoli in the following way: 'the beaches we were meant to land at, the beaches we did land at'. It is as if you and I, the working class are private soldiers landing with subaltern Cameron in the Dardanelles.

Millions of pounds will be spent on events and educating school children in the capitalist history of the Great War, another generation will grow up not questioning capitalism or war and the links between them. Cameron emphasised that the Coalition Government would continue to maintain free access to museums despite Gradgrind and austere economic policies which shows how important the capitalists view the centenary of the Great War.





Cameron mentioned Rudyard Kipling, the Poet of Empire ('send forth the best ye breed') in the context of the War Graves Commission which is apt as he shares responsibility for the slaughter of the European working class in the Great War.

The Great War was a major disaster that befell 'us', the working class in Britain and Europe. Millions were slaughtered or 'sacrificed' in the trenches. Cameron used the word 'sacrifice' seven times during his speech to refer to all this slaughter. They 'gave their lives for us', that is we, the working class did. Cameron talks about 'us', the working class of 1914 in the following terms: 'for many going off to war was a rite of passage. Many of them were excited; they would eat better than they had when they were down the mines or in the textile mills. They would have access to better medical care'. Here Cameron distanced himself and by extension 'us' from the Great War with the use of 'they', the working class young men

livestock fanned the flames of Serbian nationalism, and the German building of the Berlin to Baghdad railway whose ultimate aim was Basra on the Persian Gulf which so terrified British commercial interests in the Middle East and threatened the route to India.

Cameron believes that the Great War is important for the 'origins of a number of very significant advances', which is all very calculating. Firstly, he cites the execution of Edith Cavell as important in 'advancing the emancipation of women' which ignores the war work women engaged in, the 'middle class' women of the Suffragette Movement, and the working class women who always had to work and their involvement in trade unionism. Secondly, he sees the death of the first black army officer, as the 'beginnings of ethnic minorities getting recognition, respect and equality' which is quite baffling. It would be more apt to point to Arthur Wharton, the first black professional football player who



from the South Yorkshire coalfields or the Lancashire cotton towns. There is an acceptance from Cameron that in 1914, 'they', the working class, had it very hard, but with the implication that it's different today. But it isn't. Capitalism and the exploitation of the working class for their surplus value continues.

There are no veterans left alive today. Which is just as well for Cameron. Harry Patch, 'the last fighting Tommy' died in 2009 aged 111 years. He fought and was wounded at Passchendaele and is on record as saying things like: 'War is a licence to go out and murder for the British government' and 'War isn't worth one life. It is the calculated and condoned slaughter of human beings'.

The working class were 'sacrificed' for the interests of the capitalist class in the Great War.

### **Economic causes**

The *Socialist Standard* of November 1914 pointed out that the *Sunday Chronicle* of 30 August 1914 let the cat out of the bag when they wrote the following: 'the men in the trenches are fighting on behalf of the manufacturer, the mill owner, and the shopkeeper'.

Cameron does not question why there was war in 1914. The capitalist media and historians would have us believe that the Great War was caused by a combination of things like Prussian militarism, the 'German character' (whatever that is), blood feuds in the Balkans, diplomatic alliances that got out of control, and even idiosyncrasies in the Kaiser's personality.

Economic causes are the fundamental reason for the outbreak of the Great War. Even Keynes in 1936 identified 'the competitive struggle for markets' as the predominant factor in 'the economic causes of war'. Fundamentally, the causes of the Great War lie with 'bacon and steam trains', or the Serbian Pork war with Austria where an Austrian trade embargo on Serbian

played for Preston North End in the 1880s. Thirdly, advances in medicine, and finally 'advances in technology transformed the nature of war' which Cameron will be glad about as he travels as the capitalist sales rep for arms manufacturers. He visited the Middle East and North Africa trying to sell the latest military hardware in February 2011 at the height of the 'Arab Spring', and he was in the Gulf in November trying to sell the same stuff to autocratic regimes like Saudi Arabia.

Cameron proposed 'friendly football matches to mark the famous 1914 Christmas Day truce' which is rather ironic considering national rivalries in football are just displacement activities for war, witness the rivalries between England and Germany (two world wars), England and Argentina (Falklands War), and the most bitter of all that between Holland and Germany.

Cameron feels that 'to us, today, it seems so inexplicable that countries which had many things binding them together could indulge in such a never-ending slaughter, but they did'. He adds that in Europe 'we sort out our differences through dialogue and meetings around conference tables'. This is all rather disingenuous considering that war takes place outside Europe because that is where the resources are located. We have wars in North Africa and the Middle East, in Kuwait, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya. And is Iran next?

In August 1919 the *Socialist Standard* wrote 'while competition between capitalist groups for routes, markets, and control of raw materials exists, the cause of war remains'.

As socialists 'we' recognise the truth of what Marx wrote in 1848 that we, that is, the working class, 'have no fatherland'. It is about our identity. We should use terms like 'we' and 'our' in relation to our class *not* the nation state and the capitalist class.

**STEVE CLAYTON**

## OBITUARY

### Robin Reid 1925 - 2012

It is with regret that Glasgow branch announce the death of one of its longest serving members Comrade Robin Reid. Robin joined the Socialist Party in 1944 as a very young man. He served his apprenticeship as a marine engineer in the Glasgow shipyards and worked all his life at that trade until his retirement. Although never a speaker or writer for the Party he was without a doubt one of the best attenders of Party activities. He could always be relied on to be at all our branch, public meetings and study classes and would always make worthwhile contributions to the discussions. It is members such as Robin that are the backbone of the Socialist Party. He will be greatly missed.

#### from page 11

possible) is incompatible with capitalism—just as safety is sacrificed in so many other industries in the same pursuit of profit.

What is 'out of human control' is not this or that technology, but the social system of production under which we live. That system is quite literally out of our hands as workers, and even the capitalists who administer it must act in accordance with the needs of Capital.

People in Japan and elsewhere are right to be deeply suspicious of the nuclear industry. But that suspicion must be extended to other industries and to the capitalist system as a whole if fundamental social change is ever to occur to bring society under conscious human control.

Much of the power of the anti-nuclear movement seems to stem from the widespread sense of powerlessness people naturally have under capitalism. Nuclear energy is almost a symbol for Capital itself: something created by human beings but with a power that eludes our control.

#### Capitalism is the issue

The way the Japanese leftist have rallied behind the single issue of abolishing nuclear energy, without having much if anything to say about capitalism, is characteristic of their overall approach. The politics of the Left comes down to the assortment of positions taken on the burning social problems of the day, without stopping to consider the deeper causes; this is why an air of unreality hangs about the 'solutions' leftists propose.

Leftists vehemently oppose nuclear energy in moralistic terms, viewing it as a social evil, but pay little attention to the role of nuclear energy within capitalism. They seem to forget what sort of world we are living in; a world in which each nation's energy policy is ultimately dictated by the needs of Capital.

Japan rapidly developed nuclear energy in the 1970s to fuel its rapid growth amid rising oil prices. The issue of whether the technology was safe enough for human beings was not the primary concern. How can the Left bemoan this outcome without calling for an end to such an inhuman system? Don't they recognize that the insatiable thirst for energy is linked to the thirst for profit? This economic reality is precisely why China, India, and other countries are going ahead with nuclear expansion despite the Fukushima disaster.

That is not to say that without the profit motive nuclear energy—or coal or oil for that matter—would suddenly become 'safe.' But human beings under socialism would finally be in a position to discuss the risks and benefits of each energy source, and rationally decide on the best choices to make.

**MICHAEL SCHAUERTE**



### Who gains from 'tax justice'?

THE TAX Justice Network lobbies and petitions. UK Uncut takes direct action. Both to try to get tax-dodging companies to pay more taxes to the British government. Surely this can only be good? If they pay more taxes we can pay less. Or the government could use the extra money to provide better services or at least not to cut them so much.

You have to be naïve to think that. If you believe the media, 'we', 'the taxpayers' and 'the government' are one and the same. Because the government has a majority shareholding in RBS and Lloyds we are told that these banks belong to us, the taxpayers. This is as silly as saying in the past that the railways and the coal mines belonged to us because they were nationalised.

Most people do pay some taxes directly or indirectly but, insofar as taxes enter into the cost of reproducing people's working skills, they are passed on to employers, who have to pay wages that cover this cost. But even if taxes on workers were not passed on to employers it would not follow that we as taxpayers would have the same interest as the government. You could equally argue, as some do, that the government was robbing us through taxes of the fruits of our labour and is therefore our enemy.

The government is in fact our enemy but not for that reason. It is our enemy because it looks after the interest of the capitalist class whose interest is opposed to ours.

As the burden of taxations ultimately falls on the employing class and other property-owners, ending tax havens and closing tax loopholes would benefit only them while making no difference to us.

Some capitalist firms want tax loopholes closed for another reason – because these put companies that are in a position to take advantage of them in a stronger competitive position vis-à-vis those that aren't.

The *Times* (15 November) reported that 'John Lewis says it could be put out of business if foreign multinationals such as Amazon are allowed to continue paying tiny amounts of tax in Britain.' John Lewis's managing director, Andy Street, had told Sky News:

'If you actually improve your business by investing, what that means is you have got less money to invest if you're giving 27 per cent of your profits to the Exchequer than ... if you're domiciled in a tax haven and you've got much more. So they will out-invest and ultimately out-trade us ...'

There is some substance to this argument. Capitalist firms provide a privileged, unearned income for their owners, but to be able to continue doing this they must stay in business and for this, as Street pointed out, they have to invest a part of their profits (the larger part in fact) in cost-cutting innovations to beat or keep up with their competitors. If a competitor pays less tax that means it has more profits and so can invest more in cost-cutting innovations. It has a competitive advantage over home-based firms which can't get out of paying taxes.

No wonder home-based firms like John Lewis are complaining about there not being a level playing field and are calling for something to be done about it. The sad thing is that the no doubt sincere activists in the Tax Justice Network and UK Uncut are in effect, albeit unwittingly, campaigning on behalf of one section of the capitalist class (home-based ones) against another section (multinational ones).



## Feminist awakening

HATTIE MORAHAN was effervescent as Nora Helmer in *A Doll's House* by Henrik Ibsen at the Young Vic last year.

Ibsen, the father of modernism brought a realism and naturalism to

the theatre with *A Dolls House* (1879), and was an influence on George Bernard Shaw and Eugene O'Neill. Ibsen's play highlights the lack of women's freedom, and was critical of marital roles in middle bourgeois society. In the middle bourgeois class, hearth and home, domesticity, motherhood and wifely duty were sacred institutions.

*A Doll's House* depicts the feminist awakening ('I'm a human being before anything else') of Nora, a 'good' middle bourgeois wife of a lawyer, and a mother, who begins the play as a beguiling 'doll'. Nora ends the play as an emancipated 'Woman', literally flying the nest, abandoning her children, and her act of slamming the door as she leaves has come to represent the play itself. Ibsen commented that 'a woman cannot be herself in modern society since it is an exclusively male society'.



Eleanor Marx

Eleanor Marx was an admirer of *A Doll's House*, and played Nora in a 'private' performance in a Bloomsbury house in 1885 with Edward Aveling as Helmer and George Bernard Shaw as Krogstad. In 1886 she wrote the article *The Woman Question* where she identified that 'the position of woman rests on an economic basis' with 'no solution in the present

condition of society' but in socialism 'the woman will no longer be the man's slave but his equal'. Eleanor Marx quotes Ibsen as Helmer says to Nora 'home life ceases to be free and beautiful directly its foundations are borrowing and debts'. In her 1891 article *A Doll's House Repaired*, Eleanor Marx satirises the English petty bourgeois reaction to the play and 'repairs' the last act in a parody ending.

Eleanor Marx criticised bourgeois women reformers who advocated palliative not remedial measures but in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century bourgeois women became prominent in the Suffragette movement which campaigned for middle bourgeois women to get the vote on an equal property qualification as men. The *Socialist Standard* in 1908 wrote that the Suffragettes, who were campaigning in practice for 'votes for rich women, were 'a bulwark of capitalism directly opposed to the interests of the working class' and that 'the salvation of working class women lies in the emancipation of their class from wage slavery'. The Suffragettes suspended their campaign in 1914 to support the Great War. In 1912 Rosa Luxemburg said the vote for proletarian women could 'threaten the traditional institutions of class rule and advance and intensify the proletarian class struggle'.

Emma Goldman in her work *The Significance of the Modern Drama* of 1914 concluded about *A Doll's House*; 'when Nora closes behind her the door of her doll's house, she opens wide the gate of life for women, and proclaims the revolutionary message that only perfect freedom and communion make a true bond between man and woman, meeting in the open, without lies, without shame, free from the bondage of duty'.

## Albanian Art

'SOCIALIST REALISM' was the official art of the People's Republic of Albania between 1944 and 1990. Socialist Realism originated in the state capitalist USSR and was adopted throughout Eastern Europe. When Soviet leader Khrushchev denounced Stalin in 1956, state-capitalist Albania alone opposed this 'revisionism' and continued to revere 'Uncle Joe' right up to the fall of the Berlin Wall.

The Partisan War against the Germans and the Liberation of Albania in 1943-44 is a source for Socialist Realist paintings in the National Gallery in Tirane.

*The Victor* by Haxhiu depicts a heroic partisan amidst ruins with German POWs trudging into captivity in the background, while *Vojo Kushi* by Shijaku heroically romanticises a partisan in a red shirt atop a Wehrmacht tank throwing a hand grenade inside.

Workers in Albanian industry are portrayed, notably in the steel works depicted in *30 July 1978* by Ceka which recalls *Iron Rolling Mill (Modern Cyclopes)* by Menzel. *The Assembler* by Kokushta is an inspiring painting of a worker on a girder with red flag flying above an industrial landscape of the building of Albania's hydro-electric scheme in the 1970s.

*Female Nude* (1961) by Shijaku is beautiful and definitely not 'socialist realism' but it is 'realism' in the style of Courbet.

The enhanced status of women in Albanian society is captured by Socialist Realism in a painting of male and female engineers by Hysa in 1969, *Milk Woman* by Sulovari, *Factory Worker* by Blido, *Bricklayer* by Dule, and as athletes in *The Relay Race* by Nalbani. In the



Vojo Kushi by Shijaku



The Assembler by Kokushta

1970s art in a Formalist style of Modernism (mainly Expressionism and Fauvism) developed operating within the official parameters of Socialist Realism.

Socialist Realism was formulated by Stalin in his 1932 *On the Reconstruction of Literary and Art Organisations* which decreed that art had to be unambiguous and elevate labour to heroic status. In 1934 the Soviet state instructed that art had

to be 'proletarian', of everyday life, realistic in the representational sense, and support the aims of the Party. This effectively discouraged the avant-garde and any form of experimentation.

Socialist Realist rigidity was not encouraged by Lenin. He did not believe in a 'year zero' for Art: 'proletarian culture must be the logical development of the store of knowledge mankind has accumulated'. In the years after the 1917 Bolshevik revolution experimental 'revolutionary' art was encouraged in the shape of Constructivism, and in the cinematic art of Vertov and Eisenstein.

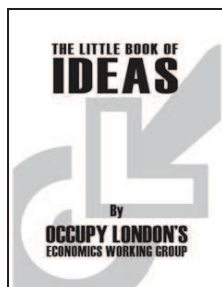
Marx in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* identified the role of labour in man's ability to reproduce 'in accordance with the laws of beauty'. Engels wrote in *The Part played by Labour in the Transition from Ape to Man* that 'labour has given the human hand the high degree of perfection required to conjure into being the pictures of a Raphael', and in *Dialectics of Nature* he wrote 'Italy rose to an undreamt-of flowering of art, which seemed like a reflection of classical antiquity'.

Marx and Engels would be uncomfortable with the rigidity of 'Socialist Realism'.

STEVE CLAYTON

## Occupy ideas

**The Little Book of Ideas. By Occupy London's Economics Working Group.** [http://issuu.com/occupylondon/docs/occupy\\_little\\_book\\_of\\_ideas/1](http://issuu.com/occupylondon/docs/occupy_little_book_of_ideas/1)



This 60-page booklet has been produced to mark the first anniversary of the Occupy camp outside St Paul's. It is not a manifesto nor a policy document but

'a small handbook which explains complex economic terms and theories in simple language' so that people can understand what's gone on and take part in discussions about what to do. The terms are dealt with alphabetically from 'Austerity Measures' to 'Tax Havens'. When it comes to proposed reforms, the case for and the case against are presented though it is generally clear which side they are on. For instance:

'Supporters of the banking system say that it has been the means by which industrial development has been so successful. However others contend that reckless lending by the banks is an inevitable consequence of a financial system driven by profit at all costs, and an alternative banking and monetary system is essential to wrest power and wealth away from the banking interests which precipitated the current crisis.'

What 'others say' here could be seen as the underlying theme of the whole booklet, i.e., that the current economic downturn was caused by the behaviour of the banks and so offers a purely monetary explanation.

It is true that in a system 'driven by profit at all costs', when things are going well and it seems that this will continue, 'reckless' behaviour in pursuit of profits will be an inevitable consequence. But this applies to the economic system as a whole and not just to its financial sector. In such a situation banks overlend. Corporations involved in the real economy overproduce. In fact, it is this latter that causes the financial crisis and subsequent general economic downturn.

Surprisingly, in view of the efforts made by currency cranks to influence Occupy, the booklet does not reflect the views of any of these. In fact it gives a not too inaccurate description of how banks work ('acting as financial intermediaries between

sellers and buyers, asset holders and lenders, in order to guarantee payment') and even of so-called fractional reserve banking ('banks are forced to keep a fraction of their deposits in case depositors want their money back').

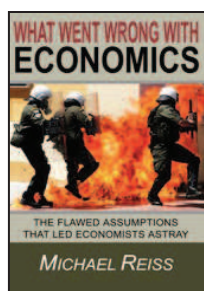
Their argument – not so different from the conventional view – is that 'in recent years the system has got out of control'. Which suggests that downturns like the present could be avoided if in future banks are subjected to adequate regulation. The booklet, not being a policy document, only mentions various proposed reforms: separating retail and investment banking, 'full-reserve banking', peer-to-peer lending, banning short selling and trading on margins.

But what if (as Marxists contend) the banks did not cause the crisis, but at most only made it worse when it broke? Then, any 'alternative banking and monetary system' would be irrelevant as a means of avoiding future slumps. A more radical change away from the whole economic system based on production for profit would be required.

**ALB**

## Flawed assumptions

**What Went Wrong With Economics by Michael Reiss. Goldhurst Press. 2011.**



This is an interesting and provocative book that sets out to challenge a number of the received assumptions of conventional modern economics. The book is

subtitled 'The Flawed Assumptions That Led Economists Astray' and this captures the essence of Reiss's line of argument. There is an underlying supposition that if only economists really understood the market economy and its operation they would more effectively be able to recommend workable reforms to it.

Reiss makes some well argued points on occasion about the dynamic of markets, using a number of simplified, illustrative models (some taken from game theory or risk analysis) to explain his key points. Thus he shows that the dynamic of financial asset prices in capitalism is different to that for the prices of most other goods and services (e.g.

when asset prices rise that often makes them more rather than less attractive to potential buyers – like those buying houses, or shares – on the basis that what goes up must continue to go up). He also discusses issues such as how statistical measurements within capitalism don't always take into account such apparent market distortions – inflation measurements, for example, typically don't include asset prices for houses, bonds, shares and so on, despite their prominence in the economy.

Reiss argues for a financial transaction tax on secondary sharedealing to stop stock market bubbles, and land reform and banking reform to address housing bubbles. He also argues against private pensions on the grounds that these also encourage asset price bubbles and crashes, and that the banks should not 'create money' for non-productive purposes like the granting of mortgages, share and derivatives dealing, and so on.

There are a number of problems with these so-called solutions to modern economic problems, however. One is that the proverbial genie is already out of the bottle and won't go back in. If any government tried to implement these reforms they would only serve to prompt a massive outflow of capital to parts of the world economy that did not impose such restrictions. Such a capital outflow would cripple any economy and no government in the modern world would seriously contemplate it.

Also, Reiss is missing a trick, because he has focused almost entirely on what might be termed the financial and credit-based superstructure of capitalism as a system rather than its fundamentals. Indeed, it is illustrative that Marx and Marxian economics are not mentioned at all. This is a serious omission because Marxian economics explains why the surface phenomena within capitalism that Reiss rails against are the reflection of the deeper, underlying 'laws of motion' of the market economy.

To take one example, the problem within capitalism regarding housing and mortgages is not that large numbers of people are debt-slaves to banks and that this situation needs reforming (there are plenty of countries in the world where renting – part of Reiss's favoured solution – is more common than buying houses using mortgages, and people there are no better off because of it). The real problem is that capitalism everywhere is based on an antagonistic system of income



## The Master



Paul Thomas Anderson's *The Master*, winner of the Silver Lion at the Venice Film Festival stars Philip Seymour Hoffman as Lancaster Dodd, and Joaquin Phoenix as the damaged WW2 veteran Freddie Quell.

This film is about the trauma and loss caused by war but also about hope and renewal. The opening part of the film is influenced by the 1946 US government documentary *Let There Be Light* directed by John Huston which was filmed at Edgewood State Hospital on Long Island, and chronicled shell-shocked soldiers entry into a psychiatric hospital, and their treatment. These war casualties suffered from debilitating emotional trauma and depression brought on by their experiences in the war.

The use of the popular wartime song *Don't Sit Under the Apple Tree (With Anyone Else but Me)*

is reminiscent of its emotionally powerful use in the 1976 film *Tracks* by Henry Jaglom which starred Dennis Hopper as a traumatised Vietnam War veteran. During WW2 and after song lyrics spoke of 'seeing you in my dreams, finding you in another day'. The scars of war and the heartbreaking returns to Civvy Street prompted people's interest in other lives, memories, ghosts, science fiction stories, other worlds, and time travel.

The periods after war are fertile times for religion, spirituality, and metaphysical ideas as balm for scarred people, in fact they are 'the opium of the people'. After WW1, spiritualism and theosophy were very popular, and after WW2 there was the 'beat generation' interest in eastern religions, and the publication in 1950 of *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health* by L. Ron Hubbard.

Hoffman's character Dodd is the charismatic leader of an organisation that seems to offer light and a beacon of hope to those damaged and lost in the world such as Quell. *The Master* is described as 'riffing lightly off the life of L. Ron Hubbard.' Director Paul Thomas Anderson says the film 'takes its lead from the beautiful ideas expressed in Hubbard's book. The idea of recalling past lives is so hopeful, so optimistic, and it is something I would love to go along with'. Anderson adds that war and death make 'people want to talk about past lives, about where we go after we die, time travel is possible,

distribution where the vast majority of the population cannot directly access housing on the basis of need. Access to this housing is dependant instead on their ability to use their restricted salaries, wages or benefits to pay for it. But those who own the land and the houses (as well as the factories and offices, etc more generally) naturally wish to pay their workers as little as possible, so there is a clash of interests. It is this intrinsically class-divided aspect of capitalism, combined with the anarchic, unplanned nature of the market economy's expansion that is a consequence of its competitive nature, which is the real issue. It is this that causes permanent social problems like poor housing and also periodic economic crises. Credit and asset price bubbles are an aggravating feature of this, but not its fundamental cause (for instance, there would have been no sub-prime mortgage crisis without an impoverished section of the working class in need of these sub-prime mortgages . . . ).

For Marx, the financial apparatus of capitalism and the periodic expansion and contraction of its credit system wasn't the problem of itself, but essentially a reflection of it. Indeed, at root, it is focusing almost exclusively on this surface phenomenon rather than the deeper, underlying structural factors within capitalism that has led Reiss astray in this otherwise readable book.

**DAP**



## Pandering And Pampering

NEXT TIME you stay in a cheap B&B or one of those dreary chain hotels, try asking for a brand-new jacuzzi to be fitted in your room.

Or why not specify how you would like the walls redecorated before you arrive? You'd expect baffled looks or swear words in reply, but not if you were staying at Claridge's hotel. There, your requests would be met with just a slightly forced smile. Paying up to £7,000 a night might make you feel entitled to make demands like those, or something more modest like having a piano in the room. 83,000 guests a year can apparently afford to do this. And humble plebs like us can vicariously book in too, thanks to *Inside Claridge's* (BBC2). The hotel's polished doors have been opened to the cameras, which follow round its servile staff and bloated guests. Claridge's is a 'five star luxury hotel favoured by royalty and celebrities, known by some as the annexe

to Buckingham Palace'. Its waiters and managers scurry round like worker ants to maintain the top-price service. There's something admirable about the staff's attention to detail, even if it is used in such ludicrous ways as forming a committee of four to choose and test new alarm clocks. Or making sure that the handle of a fork is an inch away from the edge of the dinner table. It's a shame that their energy is wasted on pandering to the whims of the elite. To satisfy the conservative tastes of the ageing clientele, there is a deliberate emphasis on following traditions, especially

deference from staff. The only aspect of the hotel which isn't old-fashioned is the price. And it's this reassurance which the guests are paying for, as much as the extravagance and the pampering. Claridge's represents a step back to a bourgeois golden age, where the wealthy can hide themselves away from the world's problems. The four-poster beds and million-pound chandeliers help insulate the elite from the rest of us. The excesses shown on *Inside Claridge's* shouldn't make us feel jealous, they should make us feel angry.

**Mike Foster**



## Film review continued

those are great ideas'.

Hubbard's book *Dianetics* was criticised in the *New York Herald* by Erich Fromm who saw that Hubbard's mechanistic view of the mind had no need for human values or conscience, and in the *New York Times*, Rollo May identified the fallacy of trying to understand human nature by invariant mathematical models taken from mechanics. Fromm later identified the mental health consequences of the contradictions in capitalism between 'having' and 'being', and the need for a sane socialist society in his book *The Sane Society*.

*The Master* was shot on now rarely used 65/70mm film stock and is a cinematic treat. It is reminiscent of the stately grandeur and beauty of films like *2001* and *Barry Lyndon* by Stanley Kubrick.  
**S.C.**

## Meetings

For full details of all our meetings and events see our **Meetup** site: <http://www.meetup.com/The-Socialist-Party-of-Great-Britain/>

### Glasgow

Wednesday 16 January 8.30pm

A GOOD NEW YEAR?

Speaker John Cumming

Community Central Halls, 304 Maryhill Road, Glasgow G20 2YE.

### London

Sunday 20 January 6.00pm

HEGEL'S MASTER SLAVE DIALECTIC

Speaker: Steve Clayton

Socialist Party premises, 52 Clapham High St, SW4 7UN.

### SOCIALIST STANDARD INDEX FOR 2011

For a copy send 2 second-class stamps to: The Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High St, London SW4 7UN

### East Anglia

Saturday 26 January

12noon: informal chat / branch business

1pm - 2pm: meal

2pm - 4pm: branch business

Quebec Tavern, 93-97 Quebec Road, Norwich NR1 4HY

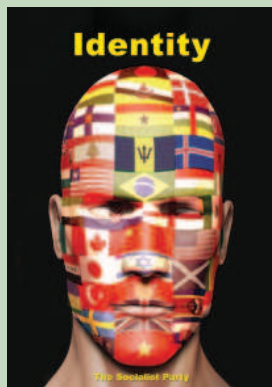
### Manchester

Monday 28 January 8.30 pm

Revolution Not Reform: The Case of the Socialist Party

Unicorn, Church Street, M4 1PW

## Leaflets from The Socialist Party



**Identity**  
Examines and debunks ideas of nationalism

**Questions and Answers About Socialism**  
Answers questions non-members often ask about Socialism and The Socialist Party



**Orders:** Up to 10 £1 p and p. Over 10 and up to 50 £3 p and p. Larger orders, write for details to The Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN.

### Picture Credits

**Cover:** Occupy London - © Crispin Semmens Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0 Generic. Day of Anger Marchers - © Muhammad Ghafari Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic. nti-nuclear protest - © OsvaldoGago 2011 Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported license. BP - © Derek Bridges 2010 Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0 Generic license. Workers - © Steve Jurvetson 2005 Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic license.  
**p4:** Fracking diagram, 2012, Mikenorton, Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported license.  
**p5:** Stephanie Flanders - © Rory Cellan-Jones 2009. Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0 Generic license.  
**p8:** Nuclear missile, US DoD, public domain  
**p9:** Denis MacShane - © antidotto 2008 Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.5 Generic, 2.0 Generic and 1.0 Generic.  
**p10:** Fukushima - © Digital Globe 2011. Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported license.  
**p11:** TEPCO - © Harani0403 2011. Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported license.  
**p15:** Waste - © Fruggo 2005. Creative Commons Attribution 1.0 Generic license.  
**p20:** *The Little Book of Ideas*. interoccupy.net. *What Went Wrong With Economics* - goodreads.com.  
**p21:** *The Master* - joblo.com. Clardige's - © Ewan Munro 2008 Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0 Generic license.  
**p23:** Beckham - © Calebrw (talk) Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported license.  
**p24:** Homeless man, 2008, Matthew Weitunski, Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Unported license.

## Declaration of Principles

*This declaration is the basis of our organisation and, because it is also an important historical document dating from the formation of the party in 1904, its original language has been retained.*

### Object

**The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.**

### Declaration of Principles

The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e. land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.

2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as

a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.

3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.

4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.

5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.

6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of

the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.

7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.



# 50 Years Ago

## 'We want work'

THE SIGHT of a demonstration marching through London demanding work is enough to shake anyone out of his complacency. For some years since the end of the Second World War, workers have regarded relatively full employment as a right, something that was here to stay. How wrong they were! Unemployment in November last topped the half million mark and was the worst figure in that month for over 20 years. And now we witness workless Merseysiders shouting slogans and waving banners. A spectre is haunting us—the spectre of the 1930s, the lean and hungry depression years.

How pathetic it is that an old problem has evoked only the same old stale and worthless ideas for its solution. If we pause for a moment and listen to the spokesmen for the marchers, we shall hear them demanding government action to stop the flow of industry southwards and to force more factories to the depressed areas. At best this will only remove the sting from the hopelessness of the unemployed Merseysider. Like most convenient cut and dried theories, it conveniently ignores the basic cause of the problem and, as we might expect, it is a stock line of the average Labour Party supporter.

In our capitalist society, industry goes where there is profit to be found. Nearness to raw materials, short lines of communication, plentiful supplies of suitable labour, easy access to markets, availability of cheap fuel and power—these are some of the main factors which decide the location of a factory and cause it perhaps to be moved elsewhere later on.

It is true, of course, that governments have also tried to move industry to fulfil political or strategic requirements, and since the end of the war firms have been encouraged to take their factories to the 'development areas.' During a period of boom when markets are buoyant and expanding, many companies are quite willing to operate from the more remote areas such as South Wales, Scotland and the North. They have a sellers' market and good profit margins. But what happens when the markets are tightening, goods are no longer easy to sell, and profit margins are shrinking? Why, production is curtailed, of course, and redundancy threatens.

(from article by Jack Law, *Socialist Standard*, January 1963)



socialist standard

■ in depth  
■ in touch  
■ insight

www.worldsocialism.org

# ACTION REPLAY

## News Fit to Print

SPORT IS news of course, and the news media need sport. Showing live football matches is often credited with being the main factor behind the rise of Sky, for instance. But the media don't just pay attention to what happens on the pitch or track or in the pool. What happens outside actual competition is also given a great deal of time and space.

This includes personal remarks, such as why tennis-player Andy Murray is so miserable-looking. And of course who's been sleeping with who, or what 'Brand Beckham' (aka David) will do now his football career is winding down.

Masses of football coverage is devoted to speculation about transfer targets and managerial changes, with endless-seeming dissections of what managers or players should do. If you don't believe us, just listen to some of the phone-ins and discussions on talkSPORT: 24 hours a day is a lot of airtime to fill.

There is plenty of reporting of such essential topics as what players say on Twitter, or whether particular players would shake hands before a match. Or what does a 'legend' who once played for a particular club have to say about some mundane topic? Not to mention the mind games played by certain managers.

In boxing, pre-fight publicity is used to stimulate interest in what will happen. The



Global brand:  
David Beckham

fight between David Haye and Dereck Chisora in July last year was widely seen as a grudge match after a brawl at a press conference where Chisora threatened to shoot Haye. Tyson Fury and Kevin Johnson exchanged insults

before their fight in Belfast at the start of December: Johnson was 'a fat pudding', according to Tyson.

Sport would hardly make such an impact without media coverage, but the media use sport and all that surrounds it to attract readers, advertisers and hence profits.

PB

**WORTH  
£9.95**

## SUBSCRIPTION OFFER

# FREE

### SOCIALISM OR YOUR MONEY BACK

Articles from the *Socialist Standard* 1904 - 2004. A running commentary of 100 years of capitalist history by a socialist journal.

■ Two World Wars
■ The Russian Revolution
■ The Rise of Hitler

■ The Spanish Civil War
■ Hiroshima
■ The Silicon Chip
■ Pop Music

...and much more

### WHEN YOU SUBSCRIBE TO the **socialist standard**

*This collection will revive a jaundiced spirit... Every home should have one.*

**THE INDEPENDENT**



For more details about The Socialist Party, or to request a free copy of *Socialism Or Your Money Back* and a subscription to the *Socialist Standard*, please complete and return this form to **52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN.**

☐ Please send me an info pack  
☐ Please send me a free copy of *Socialism Or Your Money Back* and a subscription to the *Socialist Standard*. I enclose a cheque payable to 'The Socialist Party of Great Britain' (see page 2 for subscription rates).

Name.....

Address.....

.....

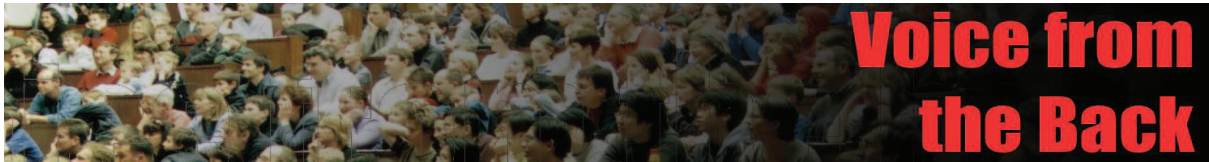
.....

.....

.....

Postcode.....





# Voice from the Back

## Nationalist Nonsense

Nationalism is a horrendous condition that has been used by the owning class to turn worker against worker in wars and has led to millions of death. A particularly stupid manifestation of nationalism was displayed in Belfast recently. Because the union jack flag was only going to be displayed on designated days at the city hall so-called British patriots rioted in the streets. 'Eight police officers have been injured and 12 people arrested following clashes between loyalists and riot police in Belfast. Six officers were injured in the Crumlin Road and Ligoneill Road area of north Belfast and two at Shaftesbury Square in the city centre' (*BBC News*, 8 December). If it wasn't so tragic it might be called comical that workers, many of them without a job, should take to the streets to support 'their' country.

## Figures Do Not Lie

Newspapers are fond of depicting a Britain with a steadily improving standard of living, but occasionally even they have to confess about the realities of modern capitalism. 'The cost of heating a home has rocketed by 63 per cent since the summer of 2008, while essentials such as potatoes and minced beef have surged by 30 per cent and 50 per cent respectively. Over the same period wages have grown by only 6.8 per cent' (*Times*, 1 December). They then go on to report that during this period wages have been corroded by a 14 percent rise in inflation.

## Baby It's Cold Inside

While major stores of High Street Santas 'Ho, Ho, Ho' in mock joviality the harsh realities of working class life are revealed by a website. 'The price comparison website uSwitch.com warned that nine in ten Britons are expecting to ration their energy use this winter to save money -- a frightening prospect

amid warnings of sub-zero temperatures. Three quarters of households went without heating at some point last winter to keep energy costs down and 15 per cent said that this had affected their quality of life or health' (*Times*, 1 December). So, remember when you are wishing your next door neighbour a 'Happy New Year' keep on your gloves, scarf and thermal underwear.

## Rough Sleeping In The Rough Society

Politicians like to pose as supporters of families but young people and families with children are increasingly facing homelessness, according to a study, which says rising numbers of people are finding themselves without a roof over their heads. 'The report, by academics from Heriot-Watt University and the University of York, says all forms of homelessness are continuing to rise in England, and argues that "deepening benefit cuts are likely to have a much more dramatic impact on homelessness".'



.... The report says national rough sleeper numbers rose by 23 percent in the year to autumn 2011, from 1,768 to 2,181 – a

more dramatic growth dynamic than anything seen since the 1990s.' The number of families who end up asking for assistance from local authorities because they are about to lose their homes rose from 40,020 in 2009/10 to 50,290 in 2011/12 (*Guardian*, 4 December). This is the madness of capitalism in action - houses lying empty while people are forced to sleep in the street.

## Conspicuous Consumption

The owning class are flaunting their obscene wealth but even by their excessive behaviour the following Christmas dinner menu takes a bit of beating. 'Costing £125,000 for four people, or £31,250 per person, the menu for what will be the world's most expensive Christmas dinner menu has been devised by London chef Ben Spalding, who has completed residencies at restaurants including The Fat Duck in Bray, Gordon Ramsay's Royal Hospital Road and Per Se in New York. Among the ingredients being used are a Yubari

King melon costing £2,500, in addition the £2,600 Densuke watermelon; 150-year-old balsamic vinegar costing £1,030; whole white Alba truffle costing £3,500; and gold leaf coming in at £6,000. To drink, a £37,000 bottle of Piper Heidsieck 1907 champagne will be served in diamond-studded flutes; diners who prefer spirits can sip from a £2,000 stock of DIVA vodka, described as a "diamond-sand-filtered vodka" and served in a bottle that is filled with Swarovski crystals' (*Daily Telegraph*, 7 December). All of this excess is taking

place in a society where millions are trying to eke out an existence on less than \$2 a day.

## FREE LUNCH

